



## **Reshaping Care for Older People Community Capacity Building / Coproduction Case Study**

### **Argyll and Bute –Timebanking**

Contact: Glen Heritage, CEO, Argyll Voluntary Action  
glenn@argyllvoluntaryaction.org.uk

Argyll and Bute Timebanking was started around 7 years ago and is operational in 6 different localities - Campbeltown, Oban, Helensburgh, Dunoon, Lochgilphead and, Islay - under the umbrella of Argyll Voluntary Action (AVA). Each locality has a Community Resilience Officer funded through the Change Fund to organise and promote timebanking with a specific emphasis on engaging and supporting older people.

Timebanking works by members contributing time on a voluntary basis for a wide range of tasks, experience and support and then 'spending' that time when they themselves require assistance or support. The range of possible 'deposits' of time is vast and varied and the ethos of time-banking is the underlying belief that everyone has something to contribute. Time deposits can vary from practical assistance (domestic tasks, simple repairs, gardening, dog walking), technical expertise (computer knowledge, teaching knitting) or emotional support (companionship, listening, advice). Time bankers can also contribute through involvement in consultations, campaigning or giving information about their experience of services etc. These areas are particularly valuable for some older people who may feel they have not got skills to contribute to the bank. Across each locality volunteers of all ages are registered with the 'bank' giving details of what they can contribute and when. When requests for assistance and support are received, local staff seek to identify a suitable match. Referrals can be received from many sources – sometimes people can make direct contact, either to become a volunteer or seek assistance or referrals can be received from families, friends, health or social care professionals.

Timebanking matches are diverse, ranging from one-to-one support around a specific task, weekly volunteering at a group or activity, helping run AVA's charity shop or one-off activities such as a pavement hazard survey carried out by young people. Individuals can bank their time and either exchange when they need it or donate it to the 'community bank' to be used in a wider way or to support those unable to contribute.

Argyll Voluntary Action (AVA) recognised that this model of community assistance and support is particularly suited to supporting older people. The very practical, reciprocal nature of the model is attractive in many ways. Older people can receive much needed practical and emotional support from within their own communities and they can contribute to the bank engendering a sense of self worth and confidence – rather than only being 'receivers' of support. In addition positive relationships, particularly across generations, are developed, which contribute to a general sense of local community 'connectedness'. This 'asset' based approach is one which AVA has strongly promoted, understanding that older

people have much to contribute and the positive benefits of highlighting what someone can do, rather than what they need, has lasting and widespread benefits.

As noted in the *Scottish Care Institute for Excellence- Research briefing 39: Preventing loneliness and social isolation: interventions and outcomes* older people are particularly vulnerable to social isolation or loneliness owing to loss of friends and family, mobility or income. Social isolation and loneliness impact upon individuals' quality of life and wellbeing, adversely affecting health and increasing their use of health and social care services.' It is well known that many older people experience a general sense of 'uselessness' and social isolation if their family and community contacts are reduced either through bereavement or their own physical health limitations. This can in turn lead to low levels of depression, anxiety and poor self care, further exacerbating poor physical health and mobility.

The SCIE briefing also notes that 'Users report high satisfaction with services, benefiting from such interventions by increasing their social interaction and community involvement, taking up or going back to hobbies and participating in wider community activities'. Timebanking offers a range of opportunities for older people to increase their social contact, take up or reconnect with hobbies and interests and generally engage with their wider community. Timebanking also provides a low level informal monitoring of older members – AVA staff maintain regular contact with all members and are able to quickly identify when needs have changed which may require additional input from services.

Staff in AVA work hard to support timebank members and identify how they can contribute, believing that everyone has valuable skills and experience to make their own unique contribution. This can be particularly challenging as some older people experiencing a sense of 'uselessness' feel they cannot contribute, only receive support. Staff are creative and supportive in helping all timebankers identify potential contributions – ranging from teaching lost skills to younger people, reading out loud, listening or giving views and opinions in consultation exercises – all making a significant contribution to local communities.

Building strong communities is a cornerstone of AVA and timebanking is a live example of how to create a framework in which communities can thrive. Linkages between individuals, groups, across different ages, social situations are made in a positive, reciprocal way, fostering confidence and a belief that everyone can both contribute and receive assistance and support on an equal footing. Timebanking's reciprocal nature clearly demonstrates in a practical sense co-production, seeking to engender a mutually supportive model of developing individual and communities', health and wellbeing.

### **Outcomes**

Developing community resilience is identified as a key work stream in Argyll and Bute's Change Fund Plan and timebanking in Argyll provides a framework for this development. It is expected that this intervention will contribute toward **Change Plan Outcomes** of:

- Emergency admissions and readmissions are reduced
- Older people live more active lives fully engaged with their communities
- More older people are able to live in their home for longer

- Prescribing levels are reduced, particularly for those with level 1 and 2 mental health issues
- Community capacity is built and older people are better engaged and active in their communities

**Success** measures will be

- Fewer older people experience social isolation and loneliness
- Older people will have improved mental health and wellbeing
- More older people will be supported to remain in their homes of their choosing for longer

These successes will be evidenced by **metrics** covering a range of measures such as

- No of people becoming actively engaged
- Each locality has timebanking resource
- No of older people supported/befriended
- No of volunteers recruited and trained to actively engage in timebanking
- No of connections made with community projects and developments
- Focus groups are convened
- Older people are trained as 'expert patients'

Information is also gathered on the effect of timebanking on outcomes such as prevention of admission to hospital or care home, prevented carer breakdown, maintaining individual at home as well as some more qualitative outcomes such as improved quality of life, improved social inclusion and promoted choice in decision making. This information will provide crucial evidence on how timebanking can support the changing shape of services for older people and assist the Argyll and Bute partnership to make decisions about future patterns of service delivery.

**Timebanking in Action**

**Netta**

A long time timebank member, in her late 70s, has benefitted greatly saying 'I tell everyone they should join, it's just fabulous'

Some of her exchanges:

Deposits – calligraphy, helping at social events, sewing trousers, working in charity shop

Withdrawals – taught to use mobile phone, window cleaning, gardening, gutters cleaned



### **Andy (pictured)**

A friend recommended he got involved after his wife died. He can 'turn his hand to anything practical' – gardening, plumbing, building etc.

Andy says 'I get great satisfaction seeing relief at getting jobs done which were worrying them like getting their hedge cut. It gets me out of house to meet other people. I want to put something back into Oban.'

### **Maggie (pictured)**

Has been a widow for 22 years and does not have a lot of family locally. She saw an advert for timebanking at local Festival of the Sea. Some of her exchanges include helping at visually impaired group, being a volunteer escort and receiving help with garden and computer advice.

Since got involved in timebanking Maggie says 'It has given me a great boost and made great difference to my life. Initially thought can't do anything, but staff helped me find what I could do and that gave me so much confidence.'

### **Helping someone cope with bereavement**

MM was devastated by the sudden death of her husband, she did not have a social network to fall back on and was dependent on her and son and daughter to provide company. As the months passed she was clearly becoming more and more depressed and isolated. She went to the GP with her daughter to see if she could be referred to a bereavement counsellor but was told the nearest was a forty five minute drive away. Not keen on medication or travelling long distance MM came back feeling deflated. Her son suggested she join the local timebank, and to use her time to help others.

MM signed up to timebank and right away was assigned to help at a local charity, helping with coffee morning and admin. The more she got involved, the more tasks she would do, the more her confidence grew. She also started going on outings with the group to theatre

and shows and this gave her a social life she would not have had. She has also made some great friends both the staff and with the service users. Her family report that their mother is much happier and has clocked up almost 1000 hours of volunteering. In return she has had baby clothes knitted for her new grandson and has had work done both in the garden and home. Timebanking staff say 'it has been lovely to watch this volunteer's outlook on life improve due to her involve with the community'.